

### **1.2.5 Evaluation and Bidder Selection**

Children's Hospital has been contracted to prepare the Request for Proposal, conduct a Bidder's conference, evaluate Bidders' proposals, and recommend the winning Bidder for the DPRS provider. The final authority for determining the winning bid rests with the Common Carrier.

### **1.3 Massachusetts Relay Service History**

A DPRS for the Commonwealth of Massachusetts was provided by Development Evaluation Adjustment Facility, Inc., (D.E.A.F., Inc.), a non-profit, state-funded agency, prior to 1991. The funding for said service ceased as of January 1991. BA-MA (formerly d.b.a. NYNEX) provided a DPRS to the Commonwealth of Massachusetts pursuant to an agreed-upon term which expired June 30, 1995, and was extended by the DTE in their order DPU 95-54. MCI Telecommunications Corp. is the current DPRS provider having won the competitive bid with a term that expires April 31, 1999, in accordance with a settlement agreement between MCI, DTE, BA-MA, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts Office of the Attorney General, and four organizations that filed a complaint in December, 1996. BA-MA is the current administrator of the DPRS. The vendor selected by competitive bid must commence provision of a DPRS by May 1, 1999, which includes a six-month period between award and start-up.

### **1.4 Schedule of Activities**

#### **1.4.1 Public Advertisements**

Public advertisements were placed in various national and local publications, including those targeted to the deaf and hard of hearing community. These advertisements notified qualified vendors of an upcoming Request for Proposal (RFP) for providing a DPRS within the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

#### **1.4.2 Activity Timetable**

Release of RFP Copies	September 16, 1998
Bidders Conference	Week of September 21, 1998
Proposals Due	October 14, 1998/3:00 p.m.
Contractor Selected	November 6, 1998
Service Agreement Filed with DTE	November 24, 1998
Begin Service*	May 1, 1999

##### **1.4.2.1 Transition Plan**

If a vendor other than the current DPRS provider is selected, then that vendor would work with the Administrator, the current DPRS provider, and the Consultant to develop a transition plan for commencement of DPRS service no later than May 1, 1999.

**1.5 Bidders Conference**

Bidders are encouraged to attend a Bidders' conference to be held at and conducted by Children's Hospital, Boston. Responses to questions regarding any aspect of this RFP will be offered at this time.

Bidders should mail or fax questions to the contact listed in Section 1.2.4 (fax number: 617-355-6345) before September 21, 1998. Additional questions will be answered from the floor during the conference only as time allows.

## 2.0 ADMINISTRATIVE REQUIREMENTS

### 2.1 Proposal Submission

Proposals are to be submitted to:

Children's Hospital  
c/o MATP Center  
1295 Boylston St., Suite 310  
Boston, MA 02215

To be considered, FINAL PROPOSALS MUST BE RECEIVED ON OR BEFORE **3:00 p.m. on October 14, 1998.** No proposals will be accepted after this time.

Ten paper copies (10 total, including one clearly marked "Master Copy") of the proposal and one ASCII diskette copy must be submitted and sealed in a package clearly marked "Confidential Bid — Massachusetts DPRS" and show the Bidder's name.

To ensure that proposals are accessible to persons with limited vision, all proposals must be submitted in black typeface with a sans serif font and with limited use of graphics.

All pre-printed material (e.g. annual reports, manuals, promotional matter, examples of consumer brochures, etc.) about the company and its services shall be confined to a separate binding. Inclusion of this material in the responses to the RFP will not affect the scoring.

### 2.2 Public Announcement of Bids

The Consultant will announce to each Bidder in writing the source of all the bids received at **Children's Hospital** by **3:00 p.m. on October 14, 1998** via fax and confirming letter if requested. This announcement to each Bidder, by 5:00 p.m. on October 15, 1998, will disclose only the names of all the Bidders who have submitted a proposal.

### 2.3 Bidders of Record

Bidders of Record are participants who have submitted a sealed bid to the Consultant, by **3:00 p.m. on October 14, 1998**, at the Consultant's offices at **1295 Boylston St., Suite 310, Boston, Massachusetts, 02215.**

Addenda and supplements to the RFP and pertinent correspondence will be sent only to the Bidders of Record.

## 2.4 Addenda or Supplements to RFP

In the event that it becomes necessary to revise any part of this RFP, an addendum will be provided to each Bidder of Record recorded as receiving the original RFP. The Bidders will be allowed a minimum of five (5) days to respond to any such addenda.

## 2.5 Binding Offer/Liquidated Damages

A proposal submitted in response to the RFP shall constitute a binding offer, which shall be an irrevocable offer for a period of 120 days. Acknowledgment of this condition shall be indicated by the signature of the Bidder or an officer of the Bidder legally authorized to execute contractual obligations. The Terms and Conditions section of the RFP (Appendix 1) provides for liquidated damages in the event the Contractor fails to commence full DPRS operations on the date specified in the contract, or on a date agreed upon by the Consultant, the Administrator, and the Bidder.

### 2.5.1 Quality of Service Requirements and Liquidated Damages

A. The provision of DPRS shall meet a number of quality of service requirements which may be monitored on a monthly basis.

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**1. Typing accuracy:** The standard typing accuracy shall be ninety (90) percent based on the scores of testing upon completion of initial training, the 90-day proficiency exam and the annual proficiency exam. The Administrator shall withhold from amounts payable to the vendor the amount of \$12,500 for each month the vendor falls below eighty five percent (85%) typing accuracy quality of service standard. If the average typing accuracy falls between 85% and 90% then the Administrator will withhold \$6,250.

**2. Typing speed:** The standard typing speed shall be per minute (See Section 3.4.8.2) based on the vendor's database reporting measuring typing speed. The Administrator shall withhold from amounts payable to the vendor the amount of \$12,500 for each month the vendor falls below sixty (60) words per minute. If the average typing speed falls between sixty (60) and sixty five (65) words per minute then the amount shall be \$6,250.

**3. Call answer:** Speed of answer should be measured from the vendors automated call distributor report and should meet the requirement of 85% within 10 seconds on a daily basis (See Section 3.3.1) The Administrator shall withhold from amounts payable to the vendor the amount of \$12,500 for each month vendor fails to meet this quality of service standard.

**4. Call blockage:** Each month OPRs are required to answer 97 percent of

the test relay calls within 30 seconds measured from the beginning of ring detection until the start of the connection as measured by the vendors automated call distributor for all calls made within each 24-hour period and at the end of each calendar month, provided that the call blockage rate does not exceed one percent (1%). The Administrator will withhold from *amounts payable to the vendor the amount of \$12,500 for each month the vendor fails to meet this quality of service standard.*

## **2.6 Modification or Withdrawal of Proposals**

Proposals may be modified or withdrawn by the Bidder in writing only up to the established due date and time for receipt, after which time the latest proposal received from each Bidder will be considered final.

## **2.7 Bid Prices**

Pricing must be final. NO ESTIMATES are allowed. Any bulk usage discounts must be calculated into the per Completed Call Minute ("CCM") price for the volume requirements in the RFP. All bid prices submitted in response to this RFP must be the Bidder's "best and final" offer.

## **2.8 Rejection of Proposals**

The Consultant reserves the right to reject any or all proposals and to waive informalities and minor irregularities in proposals received and to accept a proposal in part or whole or in combination with others.

## **2.9 Proprietary/Confidential Information**

The Consultant will treat all proposals received as proprietary documents to be used solely for the purpose of its evaluation of bids. The Consultant will not provide copies of proposals to the Administrator or to other Bidders, except that the Consultant will provide the final selected Bidder's proposal to the Administrator. Information indicated by the selected Bidder as being proprietary shall not be provided to the Administrator, except as agreed to by both the Consultant and the Bidder as necessary for contract negotiations and administration. Any other proprietary information shall be provided only with the agreement of the selected Bidder. All other proposal copies, except for one archival copy of each, will be destroyed after completion of the evaluation. However, select information and data from each proposal may be extracted, summarized, or paraphrased in the Consultant's written report of the bid evaluation. This report will not be rendered to any party, but will be retained by the Consultant along with archival proposal copies for two years or more upon the request of the DTE.

## **2.10 Bidding Company**

If a Bidder is owned or controlled by one or more parent companies, the name, main office address, and tax identification number of each parent company shall be provided on the cover sheet of the proposal. If a bidding company is independently owned, the name, main office address, and tax identification number of the bidding company shall be provided on the cover sheet of the proposal. All Bidders must include the name and title, telephone, fax number, and email address of the individual authorized to represent the bidder in discussions related to this RFP in order to receive official notifications.

## **2.11 Subcontractors**

Planned use of subcontractors shall be clearly identified and explained in the proposal, including terms of any subcontracts. The Bidder must include a copy of any proposed subcontracts with the proposal. All subcontracts must comply with the Bidder certification requirements presented in Section 5.0. The prime contractor shall be responsible for contract compliance whether or not subcontractors are used. The prime contractor will maintain the only contact with the Administrator. Bidders must also outline and demonstrate management control over all subcontractors.

## **2.12 Financial History**

To allow the Consultant to evaluate the financial responsibility of the bidding company and its subcontractors, the following items shall be submitted with the proposal for the bidding company and its parent company and its subcontractors:

### **1. Audited Financial Statement or SEC Form 10K Report for the most recent two (2) years, including at a minimum:**

- a. State of income and related earnings
- b. Cash flow statement
- c. Balance sheet
- d. Opinion concerning financial statements from a CPA
- e. Contingent liabilities

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### **2. Primary Banking Source Letter of Reference**

### **3. Subcontractor Financial Statements as in 2.12 section 1 above.**

This financial information is also required of any subcontractor who is expected to receive more than ten percent (10%) of the value of the contract.

## **2.13 Bidder Certifications**

## **Bell Atlantic — Request for Proposals: Massachusetts Dual Party Relay Service**

Each person signing a submitted proposal certifies that s/he is the person in the Bidder's organization responsible for, or authorized to make, decisions as to the prices quoted. In addition, each person signing a proposal will be required to make the following certifications on behalf of the respective organization:

1. Persons with Disabilities Employment Requirement. Preference in employment at the DPRS Center will be given to persons with disabilities, as defined in the Americans With Disabilities Act of 1990.
2. Massachusetts Residency Requirement. All employees of the DPRS Center shall be residents of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. Bidders shall describe their definition of the words "residents of the commonwealth of Massachusetts."
3. Non-discrimination Compliance Agreement. The Contractor will be required to execute the Administrator's "Non-discrimination Compliance Agreement," a copy of which is included as Appendix 2.
4. Administrator's Conflict of Interest Statement. The Contractor will be required to execute the Administrator's "Conflict of Interest Statement," a copy of which is included as Appendix 3.

### **2.14 Selection Time**

The Consultant will recommend the selected Bidder by **November 6, 1998**. The Administrator will issue a Letter of Intent and a contract must be completed on or before November 24, 1998.

If, through no fault of the Administrator, the date for completing the contract is not met, the Administrator may elect to cancel the Letter of Intent only for adequate reason and with the concurrence of the Department of Telecommunications and Energy, and the Consultant will thereupon select the next most advantageous proposal.

### **2.15 Proposal Presentation**

The Consultant reserves the right to request the Bidders to give presentations of their proposals during the evaluation period. However, it is important that each technical and price proposal be submitted in the most complete and accurate manner possible to enable a selection without the need for clarifying discussion. The Consultant reserves the right to request the Bidders to give confidential, in-person presentations.

### **2.16 Contract Document**

The successful Bidder will be required to sign a contract with the Administrator,

which will include the following elements:

1. the Terms and Conditions contained in Appendix 1 of this RFP
2. the Bidder's Proposal in response to the RFP
3. the RFP
4. any addenda to the RFP.

### 2.17 Limited Liability

BA-MA, as the Common Carrier, and the Consultant assume no liability in any fashion or of any kind with respect to this RFP or any matters related thereto. All prospective service providers and their assigns or successors, by their participation in the RFP process, shall indemnify, save, and hold BA-MA and the Consultant and their respective directors, officers, employees, and agents, free and harmless from all suits, causes of action, debts, rights, judgments, claims, demands, accounts, damages, costs, losses and expenses of whatsoever kind in law or equity, known and unknown, foreseen and unforeseen, arising from or out of this RFP and/or any subsequent acts related thereto, including but not limited to the selection of a service provider and any action brought by any service provider or an unsuccessful prospective service provider.

### 2.18 Governing Laws

The statutes and regulations of the United States and/or the Commonwealth of Massachusetts shall govern in connection with this RFP and the formation, performance, and legal enforcement of any resulting contract.

### 2.19 Disclaimer

All statistical and fiscal information contained in the RFP and its appendices, including amendments and modifications thereto, reflects the best information available to the Consultant at the time of RFP preparation. No inaccuracies in such data shall constitute a basis for change of the payments to the contractor or a basis for legal recovery of damages, whether actual, consequential, or punitive.

### 2.20 Funding

Funding of the Massachusetts DPRS will be provided through Directory Assistance revenues and the National Exchange Carriers Association (NECA) Interstate TRS fund, and will be administered by the Administrator or as subsequently provided for by the statutes and regulations of the United States of America and the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

### 2.21 Definitions

Definitions of key terms are contained in the **Glossary of Key Terms**.

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### 3.0 OPERATIONAL SPECIFICATIONS

The relay service shall be designed to provide a means whereby individuals who use text-based communication devices will be able to communicate by wire or radio over the existing or any new telecommunications network with voice users through the services of a relay service operator in a manner that is functionally equivalent to a telephone conversation between two individuals who can hear and speak.

Under Massachusetts statute, the Administrator must provide the most cost-effective and efficient relay service possible that meets the requirements of Massachusetts General Law ("M.G.L.") Chapter 159 §15E and the Americans With Disabilities Act of 1990. The Bidder shall include a comprehensive description of the methods used and detail the costs to satisfy the RFP requirements. The Bidder's proposal shall address in detail how the following specifications will be accomplished.

Attention is called to potential Bidders that it is the intent of this RFP to make available near real-time relay service that is functionally equivalent to a telephone conversation between two parties, both of whom can hear and speak. Accordingly, this RFP includes specific mandatory technical and human requirements that, when taken together, make available a relayed conversation that is as close as possible to being "natural" and "comfortable" for both parties. In addition the RFP includes "Value-Added" components that should be included in the bidders' response to the extent possible. The components are described in the appropriate sections but include:

- Use of proven protocols that transmit text at the speed of input with no loss of carrier and with interrupt capability,
- Use of off-the-shelf speech to text software trained to OPR's voice,
- Use of VCO, HCO, VCO to VCO, 2-line VCO, Video Relay Service and Speech-To-Speech Relay Service, and
- A minimum entry level of typing speed of 55 wpm for OPRs with a tested typing speed of 65 wpm after 90 days.

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#### 3.1 Overview

This section of the RFP lists and describes the specific operational functions that fall within the scope of a DPRS. The operational functions listed here are the elements that will be evaluated in the Bidder's technical proposal. Each function or requirement listed will be labeled as being in one of three categories of operational functions. Section 4 of this RFP describes how these three different categories will be evaluated.

The three categories of functions are as follows:

**Mandatory.** These are specific operational functions or specifications that **MUST** be offered by the Bidder as part of the proposed service and do not receive scoring points.

**FAILURE TO MEET ANY OF THE MANDATORY SPECIFICATIONS WILL  
AUTOMATICALLY DISQUALIFY THE BIDDER**

**Must Provide.** These are specific operational functions or specifications that **MUST** be offered by the Bidder as part of the proposed service. Scoring points will be awarded on a variable scale depending on degree of compliance, function and/or specification in comparison with other proposals.

**FAILURE TO RESPOND TO ANY OF THE MUST PROVIDE SPECIFICATIONS  
MAY AUTOMATICALLY DISQUALIFY THE BIDDER**

**Value-Added.** These are general operational functions or specifications that must be addressed in the Bidder's proposal. Scoring points will be awarded to Bidders with respect to these functions on a variable scale, depending upon the degree of compliance, function, and/or specification in comparison with other proposals.

**3.2 General Specifications**

**3.2.1 Location**

**Mandatory.** Each Bidder shall provide a dual-party relay service from a center located within the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

The Bidder shall describe in detail how he shall meet these specifications.

**3.2.2 Hours of Operation**

**Mandatory.** The Relay Center must be operational with full service 24 hours per day, 7 days per week on a continuous basis.

The Bidder shall describe in detail the plan to meet this specification.

### 3.2.3 Call Carriage

**Mandatory.** The Relay Center must be capable of processing Massachusetts intrastate, interstate, and international calls that originate or terminate in Massachusetts. Bidders may not include the cost of interstate or international calls in their bids. The price for handling such interstate and international calls shall be subject to funding for *such service which will come from interstate jurisdiction as mandated by the Federal Communications Commission*. It is mandatory that the service be designed such that all interLATA calls made through the center will be billed from the LATA of origin to the LATA of termination using the facilities of the customer's selection of an interLATA carrier.

The Bidder will be required only to provide international calls that originate or terminate in Massachusetts, provided the equipment of the foreign country is compatible. The Bidder shall indicate which international locations it recognizes as not compatible.

Bidders must provide a network design diagram and accompanying explanation indicating how this specification shall be met.

#### 3.2.3.1 Adequate Capacity

**Must Provide.** The Bidder shall describe the plan to provide, or assure, adequate capacity — both equipment and human resources — to properly address billing and equal access to the telecommunications network for DPRS consumers.

The Bidder shall describe in detail the plan to meet these specifications.

### 3.2.4 No Charge for Calls to Relay Center

**Mandatory.** All calls to the Relay Service Center shall be handled at no cost to the person making the call including calls that originate in Massachusetts, and calls that terminate in Massachusetts other than normal long distance billing procedures.

The Bidder shall describe in detail the plan to meet this specification.

### 3.2.5 Equipment

**Mandatory.** The Bidder must provide a detailed system description showing that all necessary telecommunications equipment and software will be furnished at time of start up and will be capable of expansion as required herein. The transmission circuits shall meet or exceed FCC interexchange performance standards for circuit loss and noise. Telecommunications equipment, including station terminals, must be capable of receiving and transmitting in both Baudot and ASCII codes, with Baudot as the primary setting. Methods of accessing and being accessed by computers of up to and including 300 Baud via ASCII codes, and at least up to 2400 Baud, shall be described.

It is also required that relay systems be capable of automatically identifying incoming text based calls as either Baudot or ASCII. If the Bidder plans more than one line, the text based line shall recognize Baudot, ASCII and voice in that order until such time as another prevalent protocol may supplant Baudot. If the Bidder proposes a single line for voice and text service, the answering sequence shall be voice first and then as detailed above.

The Bidder shall describe in detail the plan to meet this specification.

#### 3.2.5.1 Transmission Speeds and Interruptability

**Value-Added.** The Bidder shall describe the plan to provide improved transmission speeds that surpass 45.5 Baud and are compatible with the most commonly used existing TTY equipment currently provided in the Specialized Customer Premises Equipment ("SCPE") program in Massachusetts. In addition the Bidder shall describe the plan to provide "interruptability" by the text based telephone device user through software or hardware interrupts. This feature allows the text based telephone device user to interrupt the relay operator in the event — for example — that a voice menu system is encountered and it lists 25 menu items yet the caller wishes to select item "2" without having to wait while all 25 choices are relayed by the OPR. The caller would have the ability to "interrupt" the relay operator and inform the OPR that there is no need to continue with the menu and to process the call using the option desired. This feature should allow both OPR and text user to interrupt the other if the user's equipment has this capability.

The Bidder shall describe in detail the plan to meet these specifications.

#### 3.2.5.2 N11 Access

**Value-Added.** "N11" is the term generally given to the use of three digits (e.g., 711) to access relay services. Just as "911" has become the number to access emergency services in every state, the FCC has considered the use of 711 for relay access. The Bidder shall describe the plan to implement this feature when the telecommunications network in Massachusetts is capable of supporting it. The bid should include a separate price item to address this issue.

The Bidder shall describe in detail the plan to meet this specification.

#### 3.2.6 Automatic Number Identification (ANI)

**Mandatory.** The Bidder must utilize ANI (Automatic Number Identification) on incoming calls to the DPRS Center. The Bidder shall deliver ANI to the operator position with the initial call contact and shall utilize ANI to establish the AMA (Automatic Message Accounting) billing record.

The Bidder shall describe in detail the plan to meet this specification.

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### **3.2.7 DPRS User Preference Database**

**Value-Added.** The Bidder shall provide the capabilities for a DPRS user *preference database ("profile") corresponding to one or more telephone numbers and (or PIN numbers) for each user.* Please include the full content of any profiles now in use as well as potential additions the Bidder foresees as adding value to services. The bidder shall provide the ability to update, upgrade and modify the database to incorporate any and all referenced items in the RFP and/or contract that indicate user **profile choices**. The database must be represented to the consumer, upon request, in a clear, understandable format without heavy use of technical terminology.

The customer preference database data should be portable and should not contain any information that is restricted to use by the vendor. Four-digit Personal Identification Number(s) ("PIN") should be provided for the use of each caller. The use of the PIN number by the relay user should be optional and default to the original profile set up for that number. The Bidder shall explain how the database will be set up, maintained, updated, etc.

The Bidder shall describe in detail the plan to meet this specification.

### **3.2.8 Back-up Power**

**Mandatory.** An uninterruptible power system (UPS) must be able to provide and maintain emergency power in the event of a any type of power outage for a minimum of eight (8) hours battery capacity sufficient to operate the Relay Center at busy season, busy hour load. In addition, the Relay Center shall have installed power generating equipment capable of operating the center for extended periods of time. The Bidder must describe in detail how the proposed Back-up Power System (BPS) will support the switching system and its peripherals, switch room environmentals (air conditioning, fire suppression system, emergency lights and system alarms), operator consoles/terminals, operator work site emergency lights, and Call Detail Record (CDR) recording.

The Bidder shall describe in detail the plan to meet this specification.

### 3.2.9 Switching System

**Mandatory.** The switching system shall include:

- a redundant CPU on "hot stand-by" to ensure that no calls are dropped because of processor failure,
- a full maintenance and administrative terminal with keyboards, screen and printer capabilities, on-line system monitoring, realtime programming capabilities that will not take the system off line,
- the ability to perform preventive maintenance without taking the system off line, and
- an inventory of spare critical components (to be defined by the Bidder) that are maintained on site to ensure that the required levels of service are met.

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The Bidder shall describe in detail the plan to meet this specification.

### 3.2.10 Voice Carryover and Hearing Carryover (VCO and HCO)

**Mandatory.** The Bidder must provide both voice and hearing carryover — on a level that allows the user to adequately hear or be heard — upon request of the user. A text based telephone device user with the capability of speech may request voice carryover that will allow him/her to speak directly to the voice user and receive the other party's part of the conversation in text. Also, a person who uses a text based telephone device who can hear may request hearing carryover which will enable that person to hear directly what the other party is saying and type back his/her part of the conversation which will be spoken by the operator.

The Bidder shall describe in detail the plan to meet this specification.

#### 3.2.10.1 Enhanced VCO

**Value-Added.** The Bidder must specify whether he is able to provide enhanced voice carryover employing two telephone lines — one of which carries ASCII or a protocol with markedly faster transmission rates than 45.5 baud — for the VCO user should the VCO user have access to two lines for this purpose. Billing shall be for the initial call coming into the relay center only and only one billing record can be generated regardless of how many lines or OPRs are used to complete the call.

The Bidder shall describe in detail the plan to meet this specification.

### 3.2.10.2 Two-Way (One-Line) VCO

**Must Provide.** A two-way VCO capability shall be available for those users who *choose to use it in their conversations with one another. A two-way VCO capability* allows two users to simultaneously use the VCO feature. The OPR transcribes and transmits from voice to text for both users so that neither user must type. The Bidder shall describe the technology to be used to provide the service, any attendant OPR training necessary, and shall outline the training program. Billing shall be for the call coming into the relay center only, and only one billing record shall be generated even though this type of service requires the use of two operators.

The Bidder shall describe in detail the plan to meet this specification.

### 3.2.11 No User Restrictions

**Mandatory.** No restrictions shall be placed on the length or number of calls placed by callers through the DPRS during both peak and non-peak periods during each 24-hour period of operation. There shall be no limit at any time on consecutive calls or consecutive call attempts.

The Bidder shall describe in detail how he will meet this requirement.

### 3.2.12 Blockage Rate

**Mandatory.** The average daily network blockage rate for all calls into the relay center shall be no greater than one (1) in one hundred (100) calls so that the probability of a busy response due to network congestion is functionally equivalent to what a voice caller would experience using the voice telephone network. Calls may not be blocked at the Automated Call Distributor. Daily blockage reports will be used to determine contract compliance. If penalties are incorporated in the contract, noncompliance would automatically trigger such penalties. This grade of service shall apply to both the equipment and network availability as well as retaining an adequate number of OPRs on duty to handle surges in demand.

The Bidder shall describe in detail the plan to meet this specification including network plans and diagrams of routing systems and OPR staffing plans depicting this grade of service.

### 3.2.13 Dialing Access

**Mandatory.** The Bidder is required to have a maximum of two relay access numbers, one for voice and the other for Baudot/ASCII, or one number for both, and to describe in detail how he will meet this specification. Should other features be offered (such as VRS or Speech-to-Speech), the Bidder shall recommend the most efficient means to provide dialing access including additional numbers. The existing dialing access number(s) for DPRS in Massachusetts — Massachusetts Relay Service — shall

be available for the next DPRS provider at the completion of the contract.

### **3.3 Technical Specifications**

In addition to the above mandatory specifications, there are other mandatory specifications that are described in detail in the appropriate section. These are:

<b>Mandatory</b>	Average Answer Time	3.3.1
<b>Mandatory</b>	Confidentiality of Calls	3.4.1
<b>Mandatory</b>	Emergency Calls	3.4.2
<b>Mandatory</b>	Pre-Subscription Utilization	3.4.3
<b>Mandatory</b>	Providing Qualified Staff	3.5.1
<b>Mandatory</b>	Total Daily and Monthly	3.5.13.1
<b>Mandatory</b>	Average Blockage Rate	3.5.13.2
<b>Mandatory</b>	Average Answer Time (Reports)	3.5.13.3
<b>Mandatory</b>	Reports within 21 Days	3.5.13.12
<b>Mandatory</b>	Additional Data Required	3.5.13.17
<b>Mandatory</b>	Monthly Summary Complaint Reports	3.5.14.2
<b>Mandatory</b>	Availability of Reports	3.5.15
<b>Mandatory</b>	Financial Resources	5.1.3.1(B)
<b>Mandatory</b>	Experience	5.1.3.1(D)

#### **3.3.1 Average Answer Time**

**Mandatory.** The Bidder is required to design the DPRS to answer eighty-five (85%) percent of all calls within 10 seconds on a daily basis from the beginning of ring detection until the start of connection as measured by the automated call distributor for all calls processed within a calendar month. The Bidder shall also answer ninety-seven percent (97%) of all calls within 30 seconds on a daily basis from the beginning of ring detection until the start of connection as measured by the automated call distributor for all calls processed within a calendar month. For both of the above tolerances, it is required that the call blockage rate does not exceed one percent (1%). The DPRS must be answered by an OPR prepared to place the call, not a recorded message. If penalties are incorporated in the contract, noncompliance would automatically trigger such penalties.

Note: Should the M.G.L. governing DPRS change during the course of this contract allowing calls to be handled from out-of-state locations, ninety-nine percent (99%) must be answered within 30 seconds and not ninety-seven percent.

The Bidder shall describe in detail the plan to meet these specifications.

#### **3.3.2 System Configuration and Design**

**Must Provide.** The Bidder shall provide a DPRS system description, plan, and diagram to indicate the equipment necessary to meet the required service standards and handle the types of calls and projected call volumes.



The Bidder shall describe in detail the plan to meet these specifications.

**3.3.3 Facility Expandability**

**Must Provide.** The Bidder must present plans that estimate how facilities can be expanded to serve increased demand. The plan must address ability to renegotiate lease, redesign usage of existing space, or alternative approaches to respond to any *predictable demand increases*.

The Bidder will, at no cost to the Commonwealth, upgrade the system to comply with ruling and regulatory, traffic, or other legal changes that occur throughout the duration of the contract period.

The Bidder will provide the above-mentioned materials/documentation.

**3.3.4 Hardware and Software Expandability and Adaptability**

**Value-Added.** The Bidder shall submit criteria used for purchasing and using equipment and software that can be adapted to meet increased demand as well as new technological trends, such as increased use of computers, improved transmission speed capabilities, Video Relay Interpreting/Transliteration Service, Speech-to-Speech Relay Service, etc. The Bidder shall also provide a description of the potential for "operator release" allowing a call intended for a text based telephone device but encountering a voice — or vice-versa — to be "released" from the DPRS and allow the OPR to enable the call — voice-to-voice or text-to-text — to occur without acting as intermediary freeing up the OPR to be available for other incoming calls to the center.

The Bidder will provide the materials/documentation indicated in the descriptions above.

**3.3.5 Hardware and Software Updates and Upgrades**

**Must Provide.** The Bidder must detail how hardware and software will be kept updated within one year of the vendor's current offering for all DPRS systems and equipment. This includes, but is not limited to, all hardware and software of consoles, micro-computers, mini-computers, mainframe computers, ACDs, PBXs, trouble reporting databases, etc. The Bidder will explain how hardware or software changes will be made to incorporate new exchanges.

The Bidder will provide the materials/documentation indicated above.

### 3.3.6 System Service Upgrade-ability

**Value-Added.** The Bidder shall explain the type of equipment and staffing level requirements necessary to meet the service standards and handle the types of calls<sup>1</sup> and projected call volumes. Bidders must state how calls from text based telephone device users to voice users will be handled differently from calls from voice users to text based telephone device users if there are differences as well as characteristic differences of service to both parties of calls involving VCO, HCO or any feature offered.

The Bidder shall describe in detail the plan to meet this specification.

### 3.3.7 Network Access

**Must Provide.** The service shall be designed to include local, intraLATA toll, interLATA interstate, interLATA intrastate, and international calls that originate and terminate in Massachusetts. However, for international calls for which interconnection is technically unfeasible, the vendor is not required to provide service. The Bidder will designate which international calls are unfeasible at the present time and any plans to address the issue and increase international access.

The Bidder must provide a network design diagram indicating the quantities and types of inbound and outbound circuits necessary to complete the projected number of calls within each jurisdiction.

### 3.3.8 Access to Services

#### 3.3.8.1 Access to 900 Services

**Must Provide.** The Bidder shall describe in detail how access to intrastate 976, 940, and other intrastate or interstate 900 number services will be provided. The Bidder will also explain the methodology for billing the user directly for any charges incurred and clearly explain the methodology for accurately separating interstate and intrastate calls for billing purposes.

The Bidder shall describe in detail the plan to meet these specifications.

#### 3.3.8.2 Access to Regional 800 Services and Special Prefixes

**Must Provide.** The Bidder shall provide access to regionally restricted 800 numbers, the business offices of local telephone companies which have special prefixes or three digits and new toll-free services (888, 887, etc.)

The Bidder shall describe in detail the plan to meet this specification.

<sup>1</sup> Including but not limited to: text to voice; voice to text; text to VCO; VCO to text; voice to VCO; VCO to voice; text to HCO; HCO to text; voice to HCO; HCO to voice; HCO to HCO; VCO to VCO; VCO to HCO; HCO to VCO; Speech-to-Speech to voice, text, VCO, HCO and vice-versa (if offered); Video Relay Service (if offered).

### **3.3.8.3 Dialing Zero For Operator Services**

**Value-Added.** The Bidder shall describe the plan to provide equal access to operator services and shall explain what the plan is for users who dial (or wish to dial) zero to access the local operator for information or assistance.

The Bidder shall describe in detail the plan to meet this specification.

### **3.3.9 Service Reliability**

**Preamble.** The proposed relay service must be designed to meet the following reliability specifications:

#### **3.3.9.1 Additional Power Options**

**Value-Added.** In addition to the backup power requirements specified in Section 3.2.7, the Bidder should specify other power options. These may include:

- Additional hours of battery backup;
- Potential connectivity to a Bidder-supplied generator; and/or
- Other Bidder-recommended solutions that would be fully compatible with the hardware system(s) proposed as a part of the bid.

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The Bidder shall describe in detail the plan to meet this specification.

#### **3.3.9.2 Recorded Announcements**

**Value-Added.** Recorded announcements as appropriate shall be provided if a system failure occurs within the relay switch or on outbound circuits. Messages shall be provided in both voice and text. Intercept messages on inbound circuits may or may not be under the control of the service provider.

The Bidder shall describe in detail the plan to meet this specification.

#### **3.3.9.3 Disaster Recovery Plan**

**Value-Added.** The Bidder shall create a complete plan (not just an outline) for dealing with all types of natural and man-made problems and conditions. A primary requirement is to notify the Administrator and the Common Carrier immediately if a major problem occurs. A major problem is defined as the DPRS going off line for more than five (5) minutes. In addition, the plan should detail the levels of escalation that will be employed to deal with the problem and restore service. The plan shall be designed to ensure that no aspect of relay service is impaired.

Bidders should also provide details that address how they plan to cope with specific disasters. Details may include: alternate switching of calls, including network diagrams identifying where traffic will be rerouted if vulnerable circuits become inoperable; the provision of redundant circuits to geographic areas where users are concentrated; a contingency plan for how disasters will be handled that are not part of the network, but that may affect the network (e.g., a fire in the Central Office that serves the DPRS); and/or other areas which the Bidder considers important to include in a disaster recovery plan.

The Bidder will provide the materials/documentation indicated in the description above.

### **3.3.10 Service Expansion**

**Value-Added.** The Bidder shall be expected to deal with projected and/or reasonable increases or decreases in call volume and shall describe in detail the time lag needed to meet any unexpected increases in call volume. The Bidder shall describe its capability of expanding services (including physical plant and human resources) to meet increased call volumes. Describe in detail the plan to accommodate the "peaks and valleys" in service demand including methodology for predicting these surges and lags in call volume. Describe the plan to increase staffing, trunking capacity when necessary, as well as adding any equipment to remain in compliance with all of the standards of the RFP and contract.

The Bidder will provide the materials/documentation indicated in the description above.

### **3.3.11 New Technology**

**Preamble.** The FCC and/or the Commonwealth of Massachusetts may pass regulations that require new technological improvements to the DPRS during the duration of the contract. It is reasonable to expect that trial periods will be observed before mandatory implementation. The user communities in Massachusetts expect to benefit from advanced technology.

**Value-Added.** The Bidder shall describe the methodology and process that will be used to introduce new technologies that will improve the provision of relay service and subsequent upgrades of the system, and how these activities will be coordinated with marketing, community outreach, promotional, and/or education efforts.

#### **3.3.11.1 Voice-to-Text Capability**

**Value-Added.** The Bidder must specify if a voice-to-text capability will be available for the OPR. If available, the voice-to-text capability would enable the OPR to use voice instead of typing as the primary input to the terminal that relays information to the text based telephone user. Any voice-to-text software employed must be at least ninety-five percent (95%) accurate. Any "training" of the software to learn the voice of the OPR must be done prior to on-line implementation. The OPR must be able to manually make corrections by keyboard if necessary.

The Bidder shall describe in detail the plan to meet this specification.

### 3.3.11.2 Operator Interaction

**Preamble.** In an effort to address situations where multiple transfers may be necessary before encountering the intended party, the OPR may — when requested — place a call and instead of announcing and explaining relay, may simply request the information sought should it be of a simple nature. Examples such as the caller saying to the OPR at the beginning of a call: "Please call Macy's, 555-1212, and just find out what time they close and hangup. GA" or "Please ask for Mr. Smith's TTY extension number so I can call him direct then hangup GA". The relay user must remain on the line at all times.

**Value-Added.** The Bidder shall describe potential capabilities for the OPR to interact with the text based telephone device user and/or the voice user when requested by either party.

### 3.3.11.3 Speech-to-Speech Relay (Separate Bid Proposal)

**Value-Added.** The Bidder shall provide a separate bid that describes the plan for providing Speech to Speech relay both on a trial basis and fully implemented. This separate bid will not be included in any way in the evaluation of this RFP. M.G.L. Chapter 166 § 15E states that "Each common carrier shall provide a **dual party TDD/TTY telephone message relay service** from a center located within the commonwealth. Employees of said center shall be residents of the commonwealth and preference in employment at said center shall be given to disabled persons as defined by this section." (emphasis added). The provision of Speech-to-Speech, should it be approved by the DTE in Massachusetts, does not seem to have the same constraints as the DPRS (must be in-state) and can therefore, possibly be contracted to an out-of-state STS center that is already fully operational. Please see Section 2.20 regarding funding. Note that any proposals for this item are completely separate and will have no effect on the general bid package for DPRS in Massachusetts.

#### 1. Description:

Speech-to-Speech Service is a DPRS enhancement which enables a person with a speech disability to use the relay service with his or her own voice or voice synthesizer, rather than by using text based devices. Speech-to-Speech

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will provide trained operators who will function as human translators for people with speech disabilities who have difficulty being understood on the telephone. The relay service operators will repeat the words of the speech-disabled caller (as speech interpreters do in a face-to-face setting) to whomever the person with the speech disability is calling. The service also works in reverse, so that persons with speech disabilities may receive calls and communicate with persons who do not have speech disabilities through the relay service.

## 2. Technical Standards:

- a) Speech-to-Speech service must meet all of the minimum relay service standards described in this RFP, unless the requirement is superseded by another requirement stated in this section.
- b) Speech-to-Speech shall have its own separate 800 number. The 800 number chosen will have as many of the same digits as possible. In consideration for pronunciation and comprehension, it is preferable that no zeros, threes, or sixes be in the number.
- c) Speech-to-Speech operators must be able to increase the volume with which they speak, as some people with speech disabilities may also have a hearing loss.
- d) Speech-to-Speech users may make regular calls to text based telephone equipment users through Speech-to-Speech employing Speech-to-Speech operators and voice-to-text/text-to-voice operators.
- e) Users shall be allowed to submit to their consumer preference database (by telephone to an operator or by other means) a list of names and telephone numbers of people that they call regularly. Each entry would have a number, and operators could call up the lists to the screen by involving the caller's telephone number. This requirement is necessary because operators may have particular trouble understanding the name and telephone number of the person that the speech disabled customer is calling; unlike other utterances, this information has no context. This requirement is also necessary in the event of cognitive disabilities affecting memory.
- f) An open line with no switching must be provided so that the operator, the caller with a speech disability, and the other party can all hear each other at all times. The outcome would be similar to that observed in three-way calling. An open line also allows the other party to acknowledge comprehension if they understood the person with the speech disability, but the operator did not.
- g) Speech-to-Speech service must include access to local and long distance directory assistance and all standard operator services.
- h) Callers with speech disabilities shall have the option of asking for people by name rather than by telephone number if they have placed this information previously in their consumer preference database. The relay service Speech-to-Speech provider is expected to maintain a database of user names and associated numbers for this purpose.

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## 3. Operator Qualifications:

- a) The operators' hearing must be tested to assure that they are competent to understand people with a variety of speech disabilities. The vendor shall define acceptable operator hearing acuity levels after six months of service operation. Operators shall also be screened to assure their ability to understand the irregular speech patterns of people with speech disabilities.

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- b) The line supervisor will identify operators and remove them from Speech-to-Speech duties:

- i) if their hearing or concentration has become impaired because of a cold or other (temporary or permanent) medical condition,
- ii) if they are no longer extremely patient with customers' speech and respectful of them.
- iii) if they are unable to speak in a clear, concise, understandable manner.

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#### 4. Operator Training

- a) Adequate training on Speech-to-Speech service and the speech patterns of persons with speech disabilities must be provided to all personnel who will be interacting with such users and/or operators who complete Speech-to-Speech calls, including counseling personnel, customer service representatives, and user assistance and complaint resolution personnel.
- b) Supervisors shall have adequate training to thoroughly understand and respect the Speech-to-Speech protocols, requirements, and philosophy.
- c) The vendor is encouraged to develop a small bank of operators for the service. This bank must be large enough to handle the traffic, but small enough so that operators become accustomed to most of the users' speech patterns.
- d) Training of operators doing Speech-to-Speech must include at least eight (8) hours of training specific to that service, two (2) hours of which is training specific to voicing for voice synthesizer users. Training must include experiencing a variety of speech disabilities, possibly partly through video.
- e) The Speech-to-Speech provider must designate an individual to serve as the liaison to the Advisory Committee on Speech-to-Speech issues and to work with the relay service specialists on the Speech-to-Speech outreach program.

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#### 5. Procedures for Relaying Communication:

- a) Operators shall never guess what the caller with a speech says, but will request clarification.
- b) If a line is busy, the operator will immediately repeat aloud the number dialed to verify that the operator understood the number correctly.
- c) Users may dictate a message to be left on an answering machine in the operator's voice.
- d) After each call, operators will offer to make another call.
- e) While operators may not counsel, advise, or interject personal opinions into a conversation, they may ask questions to clarify what was said particularly if the meaning or context is unclear as relates to pronunciation and homonyms, etc.

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- f) Operators may interact with users having a problem using the service and to reassure new users. Operators may confirm to and reassure users that the user was understood.
- g) Operators also may interact with users to help the user use the service more effectively. This is particularly necessary in helping developmentally delayed users with short-term memory loss. For example, they may repeat back to the user and dial the correct telephone number that the user receives from one caller and then repeats in error to the operator in requesting another call. Operators must never attempt to assist users in ways that could interfere with the user's independence. The above directions may appear self-contradictory but are not in light of the wide variance in intellectual capacity within this user group. An opportunity for an operator to facilitate communication takes priority over transparency. However, the operator must not facilitate if there is a great risk of diminishing communication. The user retains control and may accept or deny any attempts at assistance.
- f) Given the possibility of limited telephone experience and delayed social development of some users, operators will prompt users leaving messages on answering machines who forget to leave their name and/or telephone number.
- g) Operators will avoid informality interpretable by users as patronizing. Adult users must always be treated as mature adults regardless of their behavior.
- h) Before dialing, the operator will ask, "Shall I tell the party who's calling?"
- i) Provider is encouraged to use the same operator throughout the Speech-to-Speech call. When a change of the operator is necessary, it shall only occur at the end of each conversation. Operator change is permitted during a conversation at the request of the user or if the operator becomes physically incapacitated. Operator change is very disruptive to users with speech disabilities. It may prompt the fear or concern that the new operator may not understand them as well as the first operator did. Operator change is rarely necessary during Speech-to-Speech calls as repetitive motion injury (RMI) is not an issue.
- j) At the start of the call the operator will announce that he or she will voice for the person with a speech disability throughout the call unless both parties ask him/her to stop.
- k) Some people with speech disabilities can be clearly understood if allowed to speak uninterrupted; there is no need for operators to voice for them, there is simply the need for the other party not to interrupt them. Such customers may request the operator to only repeat what they say when the called party misses a word or words.
- l) The Speech-to-Speech operators' room should be quiet and the partitions between the operators' stalls should be sound proof enough so that operators can concentrate intensely on hearing the caller's speech.
- m) Operators must be able to retain information from one inbound call for use in a subsequent outbound call, and such information shall be retained for the duration of the inbound call. (Such as repeated calls to various answering machines with the same message).
- n) The vendor will provide voicing for people with speech disabilities calling each other, for both parties when requested.

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## 6. Reporting Requirements:

- a) The Advisory Committee may request input directly from the operators through the use of periodic surveys as the Program deems necessary.
- b) *Speech-to-Speech calls will be tallied separately from text-to-speech calls made using the "s" as required in Section 3.4.9.15.*
- c) The Speech-to-Speech provider shall provide all of the Traffic Reports required in this RPF (See Section 3.5.13) separately for Speech-to-Speech calls.

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## 7. Bidding Information:

Bidders must provide a description of how Speech-to-Speech Service will be provided in connection with the relay service. This description must include an estimate of Speech-to-Speech call volumes during the first twelve (12) months of operation and a description of how the operators' stations will be set up and equipped to provide the service. Bidders must also comment on their planned training program for speech-to-Speech operators.

The Bidder shall describe in detail how he will meet this requirement.

### 3.3.11.4 Video Relay Service (Separate Bid Proposal)

**Value-Added.** The Bidder shall provide, as a separate bid and contingent upon approval by the DTE, for the operation and maintenance of a video relay service (VRS) system. This separate bid will not be included in any way in the evaluation of this RFP. A three month trial shall be conducted to approximate the conditions a functional VRS would encounter. For a period during the business day, 12:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m., Monday to Friday, the service will provide up to six (6) simultaneous video relay calls. Four video lines will be dedicated to accepting incoming calls for telephone relay by Video Relay Interpreting/Transliterating (VRI) operators. Two additional lines on stand-by shall be available for Supervisors to use for customer assistance or for call back up/overflow capability.

M.G.L. Chapter 166 § 15E states that "Each common carrier shall provide a **dual party TDD/TTY telephone message relay service** from a center located within the commonwealth. Employees of said center shall be residents of the commonwealth and preference in employment at said center shall be given to disabled persons as defined by this section." (emphasis added). The provision of Video Relay Service, should it be approved by the DTE in Massachusetts, does not seem to have the same constraints as the DPRS (must be in-state) and can therefore, possibly be contracted to an out-of-state VRS center that is already fully operational. Please see Section 2.20 regarding funding.

#### A. VRS Center Work Sites / VRS User Sites

The Bidder shall provide a detailed plan to supply telecommunications services and equipment for four (4) Telecommunications Relay Service Video Relay